

BRIEFS

RACIAL UNITY TO BE CONFERENCE THEME

NASHVILLE (BP) — A racial unity conference on the 50th anniversary of the assassination of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. has been announced by the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and The Gospel Coalition. The event, MLK50: Gospel Reflections From the Mountaintop, will be held April 4, 2018, in Memphis, half a century to the date of King's slaying in the city, from 1 p.m. - 9 p.m. at the Memphis Convention Center. Registration and other information on MLK50 is available at mlk50conference.com.

VEEP VOTE SINKS PLANNED P'HOOD

WASHINGTON (BP) — The U.S. Senate approved repeal of a pro-Planned Parenthood rule by the slimmest of margins March 30 in an action that twice required Republican U.S. Vice President Mike Pence, to break ties. Pence's decisive votes, first to bring the proposal to the Senate floor and then to pass it before the full Senate, broke 50-50 roll call votes and provided final action by Congress to reverse an Obama administration regulation that effectively barred states from prohibiting funds for Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion provider and the recipient of half-a-billion dollars of taxpayer subsidy each year, and other abortion providers.

PARKING DISPUTE LEADS TO COURT

CHICAGO (BP) — Immanuel Church in Chicago has filed a federal lawsuit over the city's enforcement of a zoning ordinance that won't allow the congregation to purchase its building near the University of Illinois-Chicago campus. Churches are a permitted use in the zoning, but the city contends the church must have a minimum number of parking spaces not counting legal street parking. The church wants the city to accept legal street parking spaces as an offset to the requirement.

Leaders support retaliatory Syria attack

Prayer for Middle East encouraged

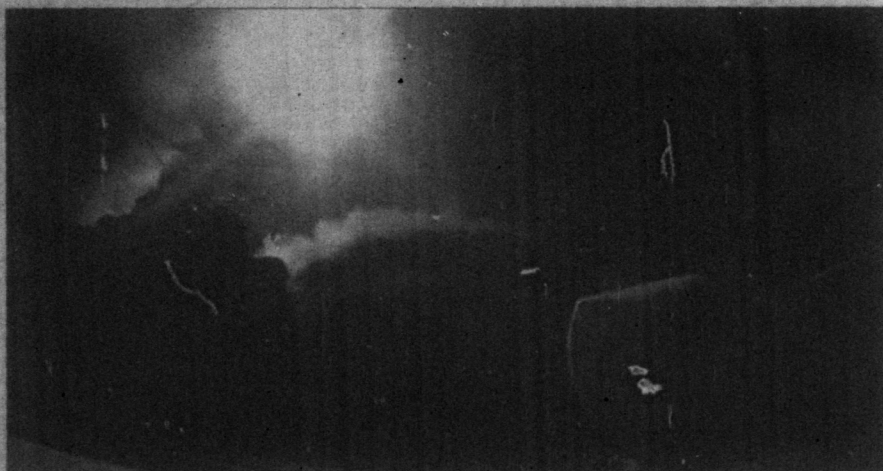
NASHVILLE (BP and local reports) — U.S. President Donald Trump's retaliatory cruise missile strike April 6 against Syria for using chemical weapons on its citizens has Southern Baptist leaders proclaiming the American reaction was appropriate and pledging prayer for the current situation in the Middle East.

Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Steve Gaines, pastor of Bellevue Church in suburban Memphis, said he "completely support[s]" Trump's authorization of the attack.

Former U.S. Army Chief of Chaplains Douglas Carver, a Southern Baptist, said the strike "met the 'just war' criteria for military actions."

Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) President Russell Moore said the Syrian regime's "murderous terrorism... threatens to further unravel the already precarious situation in the Middle East."

The two American warships fired 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles at Al Shayrat airfield, believed to have been used two days earlier to launch a chemical attack against a northern Syrian city held by rebels in the nation's six-year civil war.



SWORD OF FIRE — American warship USS Porter fires a Tomahawk cruise missile at a Syrian airbase in the pre-dawn hours of April 6, in retaliation for deadly chemical attacks ordered by Syrian dictator Bashar Hafez al-Assad on his own people. Both the Porter and the USS Ross, the other U.S. warship involved in the attack, were built at Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula. (BP screen capture courtesy of U.S. Department of Defense)



TRUMP ASSAD

Syria's chemical attack killed at least 86 people, including 27 children, according to CNN.

The U.S. missile strike, carried out just before 4 a.m. local time to minimize casualties, killed 86 people, according to news media reports.

The action targeted aircraft, fuel, ammunition supply bunkers, and "the things that make the airfield operate," a Pentagon spokesman noted.

However, news media have reported that Assad, in an act of defiance, has ordered military flights from the airfield to con-

tinue despite the damage inflicted by the missile direct hits.

Trump said deterring "the spread and use of deadly chemical weapons," like the deadly nerve agent Sarin allegedly deployed by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, is in the "vital national security interest of the United States."

Gaines told Baptist Press (BP) in written comments that Assad "must be held accountable for

see SYRIA on p. 5

Spring Trail Ride set for April 21-22



The 2017 Spring Trail Ride at Central Hills Retreat near West, sponsored by the Evangelism Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, will be held April 21-22. Central Hills Retreat offers abundant natural scenery and a safe environment for adults and families, from the beautiful hardwood bottoms to the cutover featuring young pines to the scenic view of the Central Hills Lake. Cost is \$45 per person and includes room or RV hookup, three meals, and insurance. For Saturday-only riders, cost is \$20 per person. Participants must provide their own horse. Negative Coggins required. Limited number of covered stalls available on a first-come, first-served basis. To register or for more information, contact Jordan East at jeast@mbcb.org. Telephone: (662) 289-9730.

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

What it took

He grew up before him like a young plant and like a root out of dry ground. He didn't have an impressive form or majesty that we should look at him, no appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of suffering who knew what sickness was. He was like someone people turned away from; he was despised, and we didn't value him.

Yet he himself bore our sicknesses, and he carried our pains; but we in turn regarded him as stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on him, and we are healed by his wounds. We all went astray like sheep; we all have turned to our own way, and the LORD has punished him for the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth. Like a lamb led to the slaughter and like a sheep silent before her shearers, he did not open his mouth. He was taken away because of oppression and judgment; and who considered his fate. For he was cut off from the land of the living; he was struck because of my people's rebellion. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, but he was with a rich man at his death, because he had done no violence and had not spoken deceitfully.

— Isaiah 53:2-9 (CSB)

As we fully prepare to observe Easter 2017 with the joy and appreciation of the saved, we know that our Savior lives and is one day coming for us. His beloved. There's no doubt about that.

Christians celebrate our risen Savior with images of an empty tomb with death clothes neatly folded on the slab of rock where Jesus was laid. Our crosses memorialize the sacrifice He made for us, and emphasize the significance of His resurrection. To those religious symbols we have added eggs, bunny rabbits, and baskets of colorful candy.

Sometimes it seems too neat and clean — almost sterile. It's an easy thing to read a few chapters of the Bible once a year or so

about the mistreatment of Jesus, and then go about our daily business. Perhaps we should pause during this season of victory, and contemplate exactly what it was Jesus went through to save us. It wasn't nearly as pretty as our modern, sanitized images depict.

The beating Jesus endured can hardly be imagined today, in our gentle society. All the flesh was literally torn from his back, exposing raw nerve endings and ragged muscle. On that mangled and bleeding back was placed a wooden cross, large and heavy and rough enough that the pain in His still-fresh wounds was sure to be maximized. He was beaten again as he carried his own instrument of death to the place of the skull.

There, he was stripped naked and fastened to the cross he had carried with the large-diameter beam and nails of the day that severed nerves and blood vessels with great agony. His feet were affixed in a similar manner, configured so as to make it impossible to breathe once the cross was upright.

His cross dropped with a thud into the hole where it would stand, no doubt tearing the flesh around the nails and further opening the wounds. After a short while, insects attracted from great distances by the scent of His blood settled into the open wounds.

He hung there, gasping for breath and pleading for water as those around the cross ridiculed him. The pain rose, the insects increased, the mockery rang in his ears, and yet His only plea was for His Father to forgive us.

After a prolonged period of agony, it was finished and the happy part was about to begin. The tomb was soon empty, our Savior had risen, and the world would never be the same.

We Christians have every right to celebrate the greatest event in history, the completed plan of eternal salvation for all mankind. However, let us never overlook what it took to get us to that point. It wasn't pretty, and it didn't come without unimaginable suffering, but it had to be done.

The prophet Isaiah understood those facts 700 years before Christ was born. On this and every joyous Easter, we should too.

Celebrate the Cooperative Program

On April 9, Cooperative Program Sunday was celebrated across the Southern Baptist Convention. In this issue of The Baptist Record, a special section is being published on the benefits of cooperating as one body to achieve our Lord's Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20).

La Vita e Bella is Italian meaning, "Life is Beautiful." Because I do not speak Italian, that phrase never entered my vocabulary until my wife and I became recipients of a beautiful framed stained glass window with those words etched into the stunning colors of bright red, yellow, blue, and green glass. This gift is now on display in my home.

Every time I see the beautiful agrarian scene depicting the Italian countryside, it reminds me of the sweet Christian woman who gave it to my wife and me. She is now in Heaven, but I have something that will always be a reminder of the love she had for her pastor and his wife.

Southern Baptists living in the 21st century have a visible and viable reminder of the love our Baptist ancestors had for the Lord and for the mandate He gave to reach the nations with the Gospel, and it is the Cooperative Program. Since its launch in 1925, the effectiveness of the Cooperative Program has been dependent upon individuals, churches, state conventions, and Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) entities cooperating and working toward a common goal of sharing the Gospel with every person on the planet.

Ninety-two years later, the mosaic of cooperation is still evident in the faces of our Southern Baptist missionaries serving and sowing the seeds of the Gospel through the International Mission Board based in Richmond, Va., and the North American Mission Board outside Atlanta in Alpharetta, Ga. Both of these entities receive vital Cooperative Program dollars.

The Cooperative Program supports theological education through the six SBC seminaries situated from California to North Carolina and from Missouri to New Orleans. The Cooperative Program promotes biblical values through the Eth-



Guest opinion
with Rick Blythe

ics and Religious Liberties Commission headquartered in Nashville.

The Cooperative Program helps fund missions and ministries in Mississippi, including the Baptist Children's Village, disaster relief, and church planting. The Collegiate Ministry Department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board is preparing students in the areas of leadership and missions service as the next generation of leaders in our churches and denomination. Strong support from area churches and associations, and vital Cooperative Program gifts make these many achievements possible.

The Cooperative Program is the most efficient and effective method for churches to make a wide global impact for the Gospel — and it all begins with Mississippi Baptists giving through their local church.

Another Italian phrase with which I am more familiar is, *Sempre Fedele*, or "Always Faithful." As we stroll down God's gallery of grace and look at the portraits of the faithful men and women of God, may we be inspired to be Always Faithful to the Master and His Message.

To all of our Mississippi Baptist churches, I want to thank you for your faithfulness in giving through the Cooperative Program. Let it continue for the sake of those who have yet to hear the message that Jesus saves!

Blythe is director of stewardship/Cooperative Program promotion at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson. He may be contacted at rblythe@mbcb.org.

THE Baptist Record

Editor
William H. Perkins Jr.
wperkins@mbcb.org

Advertising
Dana Richardson
drichardson@mbcb.org

Associate Editor
Tony Martin
tmartin@mbcb.org

Circulation Manager
Amy Masser
amasser@mbcb.org

Layout/Design
Meggie Young
myoung@mbcb.org

Baptist Record
Advisory Committee:
Whit Lewis, New Albany
Derrick Wilson, Kosciusko
Carolyn Reeves, Oxford
Garland Boyd, Brookhaven
Lucy Stringer, Foxworth
Don Hicks, Bay Springs

Send news, communication, and address changes to: The Editor, Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

Tel: (601) 968-3800
Fax: (601) 292-3330
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So. Baptist senator advocates for jailed minister

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — A Southern Baptist member of the U.S. Senate has asked the U.S. State Department to explain its diplomatic strategy for gaining the freedom of American citizens wrongly imprisoned overseas including Matthew Brunson, an Evangelical Presbyterian pastor held by Turkey since last October.

A Southern Baptist religious freedom advocate, meanwhile, encouraged advocacy for all prisoners of conscience.

Sen. James Lankford (R-Ok.) sent a letter March 16 to urge U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to establish a diplomatic approach that includes the use of sanctions against countries that unjustly impris-

on Americans for such reasons as their religious beliefs.

In his letter, Lankford asked Tillerson a series of questions about State Department policies and procedures regarding the foreign detention of Americans. "It is critically important that the United States has a strategy in place for how to engage with a foreign government when they are holding one of our citizens. We cannot allow law-abiding Americans to spend countless days, months or even years in a foreign detention or prison system without a concrete plan in place to secure their release."

While Lankford's latest letter to Tillerson focuses on unjustly imprisoned Americans, Lankford also has worked in



BRUNSON LANKFORD

Congress on behalf of persecuted religious adherents and other foreign citizens who are detained, imprisoned, tortured, or otherwise persecuted.

Lankford, a member of Quail Springs Church in Oklahoma City, served as the director of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma's Falls Creek Baptist Conference Center for 13 years before his 2010 election

to the U.S. House of Representatives. He won election to the Senate in 2014.

"Victims of religious persecution include prisoners of conscience all around the globe," said Matthew Hawkins, coalition director of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville.

"As Christians, we pray for our fellow Christians, for their care and the advance of the gospel because of their suffering. We also advocate for the release of prisoners of conscience of any faith because no government has authority over the conscience."

In February, Lankford and Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fl.) led an appeal by 10 senators that urged U.S. President Donald

Trump and Tillerson to nominate quickly an ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom. However, the Trump administration has yet to name a nominee.

Lankford also serves as co-chairman with Rep. Mark Walker, R-N.C., another Southern Baptist, of the Congressional Prayer Caucus, which advocates for religious freedom in the United States and overseas.

In December, Lankford and two House of Representatives members met in Turkey with Bilal Ucar, the country's assistant justice minister, to advocate for Brunson's release. Brunson had served as a pastor in Izmir, Turkey, for more than 20 years before his detention.

Pastor still missing in Muslim region

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (BP and local reports) — Two months have passed since the disappearance of Malaysian pastor Raymond Koh, whom family and friends believe was kidnapped because of his interaction with Muslim Malays.

Police have arrested a suspect in the kidnapping but have not released any information about Koh's possible whereabouts.

On March 5, hundreds of Christians around Malaysia held candlelight prayer vigils in solidarity with Koh's family. Holding candles and signs reading, "Where is Pastor Raymond?" and "Let Raymond go," the people prayed for the pastor's safe return.

"We pray for his safe and quick release," his wife Susannah Lieu Sow Yoke said as she broke into tears. "At this time we look to God and [hope that] he'll be safe and we'll meet him again."

The morning of Feb. 13, while the 62-year-old pastor was on his way to a friend's house in Petaling Jaya near Kuala Lumpur, three black SUVs surrounded his car and forced it to stop within 100 meters of a police complex, according to some reports.

Nearby closed circuit television cameras captured video of masked men getting out of the SUVs and walking toward Koh. A struggle appeared to take place in Koh's car before all of the vehicles left the area. The whole incident, which reportedly took less than a minute, was posted to the Internet by the Malaysian newspaper The Star.

The family offered a \$22,500 reward for information on the

pastor's whereabouts but so far no leads have surfaced.

Koh led an Evangelical Free Church of America congregation in Malaysia for 20 years before starting the ministry Harapan Komuniti in 2004 to aid single mothers, drug addicts, and people suffering from HIV/AIDS.

The ministry also holds an after-school program and English tutoring for students. Harapan Komuniti doesn't discriminate against whom it helps, and many of the recipients of its aid are Muslim Malays.

Police are investigating a link between the kidnapping and the threats against Koh. The arrest in the case reportedly followed a ransom demand.

Islam is the official religion in Malaysia, and Muslims are governed under state-administered sharia law. The Malaysian constitution protects the rights of non-Muslims including Buddhists, Christians, and Hindus to practice their religion as long as they do not evangelize Muslim Malays.

Yet Christians have begun facing other restrictions as well. In 2014, a court upheld a ban on Christians using the word "Allah," the Malay word for God, in publications. With Islamic police eyeing any interactions between Malays and Christians, Malays are a largely unreached group without the Gospel.

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NEW DETAILS

EASTER SUICIDE BLAST IN PAKISTAN
Attack in Lahore Claimed by Taliban Faction

Easter bombing leaves lasting grief for Pakistani Christians

LAHORE, Pakistan (BP) — Families are still struggling a year after a suicide bomber killed more than an estimated 75 people and injured hundreds others in an attack targeting Christians at Easter in Lahore, Pakistan, noted International Christian Concern (ICC) on the event's March 27 anniversary.

At least 21 Christians were killed and 45 Christians injured when an Islamic State terrorist donned a suicide vest he was wearing, killing an estimated 75 people and injuring about 340 others during an evening Easter celebration in a public park.

"The Easter day bombing left me alone," Tariq, a bombing survivor who was injured and lost his brother in the blast, told ICC. "My brother always supported me in difficult times. However, after his death I was extremely depressed."

Added Tariq's sister Sumbal, "I will never forget my brother."

The 3.9 million Christians who comprise only two percent of Pakistan's population continue to live in danger in

"Pakistan continues to be a deadly country for Christians to live and practice their faith. Christians not only face deadly attacks... but they must also endure social discrimination and blasphemy laws."

William Stark

ICC Regional Manager

the country that Open Doors ranks as number four of its 2017 World Watch List noting the most severe persecution of Christians.

"Pakistan continues to be a deadly country for Christians to live and practice their faith," ICC Regional Manager William Stark said in a press release. "Christians not only face deadly attacks... but they must also endure social discrimination and blasphemy laws."

The anniversary comes at a heightened period of terrorism

against various sectors of Pakistani society, with half a dozen bombings one week in February alone killing more than 125 people and injuring several hundred, the Washington Post reported Feb. 18.

In the most deadly February attack, at least 88 were killed and 250 injured during a religious gathering in the courtyard of a Sufi Muslim shrine in southeastern Sindh province, the Post said.

In response to the series of attacks, the Pakistani government placed security forces on high alert and pledged to "liquidate" all terrorists, the Post said. More than 100 suspected Islamist militants were hunted down and killed, authorities reported, but Pakistani citizens have accused the government of complacency.

In the Easter 2016 bombing, many of the victims were women and children, as the suicide bomber detonated at least eight kilograms of explosives near the children's swings in Gulshan-e-Iqbal Park, Morning Star News said after the tragedy.

Easter is a glorious celebration day in the life of the church. Probably the highest attendance recorded each year will be at the Easter occasion. Some churches have a full week of Easter services and all of us join together to celebrate the risen Lord on Easter Sunday. I'm sure that there are many words of Easter, but I want you to think about for a moment Easter in one word and that word is gone. The word gone simply defined means, "to not be present; not at a place; at times not even existing." How would gone represent Easter? Well, let me give you three times that gone would be the appropriate word for what is taking place at Easter.

The first is the believers that were gone. There at the close of Jesus' life the disciples are going to disappear from the scene. In fact, the Scripture says in Luke 22:33 and 34 that when Jesus said that the one who was going to betray Him is there, they began to ask, "Who is it; is it I?" Of course it was Judas who was going to do that, but all of them were questioning about themselves. When they went out to the garden and the soldiers came and took Jesus, Matthew records an interesting thing in chapter 26 verse 58 as he tells us Peter followed of Jesus "afar off." He's close enough to observe, but far enough away that he didn't have to get involved. At the critical time of Jesus' life, soon to stand mock trials, then to be carried out to Golgotha to be crucified, the disciples for the most part were gone.

Now I do not intend to be too harsh about them being gone, for all of us would have to say that there are times in



Directions

With Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

Easter in a Word - GONE

our lives that we have not been all that Jesus wants us to be. It's easy to kind of just disappear and be gone. Easter is a magnificent time of the year, not only to celebrate what Christ has done for us, but to evaluate what we do for Him and to actually think about how close are we to Him, how involved are we in His kingdom work, how ready and available are we when He may need us?

Peter, who was so vocal about his commitment to Jesus that he would not deny Him and he was going to stay with Jesus even if it meant death, soon he would find himself at a distance away from Jesus somewhere in the shadows of the darkness of the night following afar off. Then he would find himself standing there in a crowd of people, warming himself at the fire but being accused of being one of his followers. And then he would of course deny that he even knew Jesus. What an amazing thought that

could creep into our own lives and our relationship to Jesus that as much as we know Him and as close as we feel to Him and as much as we love Him, we could come to a place of being gone.

A second gone related to Easter is that our burdens are gone. By that, I am referring to the statement of Jesus when He is hanging on the cross. What a wonderful and incredible thing it is to hear Him when He says, "It is finished" (John 19:30). No doubt, many of you know that that could be translated to something like, "It is paid in full." Jesus took all of our sins upon Him, and as He came to His last breaths, He endured the pain, experienced the excruciating suffering of sin, and He paid for our sins. A debt we could never pay, and He said, "It is finished." It is all paid in full for you.

If you've ever had a debt, maybe a student loan or a car note or an over-

spent credit card and you got serious about paying it off, to finally make that last payment, what a relief and what a joy it brings just in a small piece of our world. But this is not talking about just a financial debt that we have, but our sin debt. So huge, so often repeated, that it is impossible to even think about paying it back, but Jesus said, "I have done it for you." And the burden of sin with all of its guilt and all of its shame and all of its hurt and pain, all of it, gone, that is why we celebrate Easter.

The third gone at Easter has to do, of course, with the tomb. The body is gone. Luke 24:2-6 tell about those early morning visitors that came out to the grave only to find that the stone had been rolled away and the tomb is empty and the body of Jesus is gone. Well, it wasn't just gone, it was alive, and He who had been dead, liveth forever! Jesus not only died for us, miraculously, magnificently, He rose from the dead and is alive forevermore. He is alive today. He is alive to give you life this very day.

The body was gone, but Jesus may come to your heart even now and be knocking wanting to come and be your Lord and Savior. If you've already trusted Him and you know that He lives in you, He may be there wanting to encourage you, to bless you, to help bring meaning and purpose in ways that maybe you have gotten away from. Let this Easter be a glorious celebration of a renewed walk with Him realizing that so many things, all of your sins, all of the consequences of them, He took upon Him and they are gone and He is alive.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

Nominees sought for MBC posts

The 2017 Committee on Nominations approved by the messengers to the 181st Mississippi Baptist Convention last Fall will soon begin reviewing the trustee/board member positions on the boards and commissions of the Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) to serve in 2018. According to Tommy Williamson, committee chairman and associational missions director for Mid-Delta Association in Cleveland, there are a limited number of vacancies to be filled on the following boards and commissions:

- Baptist Children's Village.
- Baptist Health Systems,

Inc. (Jackson).

- Baptist Memorial Health Care System, Inc. (Memphis).
- Board of Ministerial Education.

- Education Commission.
- Historical Commission.
- Blue Mountain College.
- Mississippi College.
- William Carey University.
- Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission, Inc.
- Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.
- Mississippi Baptist Foundation.

The Committee on Nominations will work with the heads of the institutions and agencies

to bring a list of nominees to be approved by the messengers of the 182nd annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention on Oct. 31-Nov. 1, at First Church, Jackson.

For nomination forms, telephone Executive Administration at (601) 292-3201 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 201. E-mail: mteel@mbcb.org. Web site: mbcb.org.

Completed forms should be mailed to the Committee on Nominations, c/o Dr. Jim Futral, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530, at the above address to be received no later than the May 1 deadline.

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Revivals & Homecomings

► **Hardy Street Church, Hattiesburg:** Revival, Apr. 9 - 12. Harry Lucenay, speaker; Wes Dykes, music; for more information, visit www.hardysbc.net or call (601) 544-1794.

► **Self Creek Church, Macon:** Revival, Apr. 9 - 12; Sun., 6 p.m. Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Dan Robertson, speaker; Jeremy and Savannah Brown, music; Betty Yarbman, pianist; Larry W. Watson, pastor.

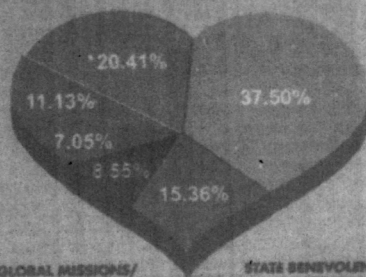
April 13, 2017
www.mbc.org

THE Baptist Record

SPECIAL EDITION

2017 CP BUDGET

	2017 BUDGET	% TOTAL
GLOBAL MISSIONS/SBC		
INTERNATIONAL MISSION BOARD	\$5,931,776	18.90%
NORTH AMERICAN MISSION BOARD	\$2,681,600	8.55%
THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION	\$2,607,547	8.31%
SBC OPERATIONS	\$351,752	1.12%
ETHICS/RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMM.	\$194,232	0.62%
SUBTOTAL	\$11,766,907	37.50%
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION		
MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE	\$2,569,215	8.19%
WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY	\$2,444,009	7.79%
BLUE MOUNTAIN COLLEGE	\$957,251	3.05%
BOARD OF MINISTERIAL EDUCATION	\$380,500	1.21%
EDUCATION COMMISSION	\$53,454	0.17%
SUBTOTAL	\$6,404,429	20.41%
CHURCH GROWTH MINISTRIES		
DISCIPLESHIP & FAMILY MINISTRY	\$610,777	1.95%
CAPITAL NEEDS	\$485,000	1.55%
SUNDAY SCHOOL	\$436,010	1.39%
CHURCH MUSIC	\$394,478	1.26%
CHURCH GROWTH	\$460,255	1.47%
PASTOR/LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	\$264,481	0.84%
EVANGELISM	\$326,949	1.04%
STEWARDSHIP	\$266,755	0.85%
CHURCH-MINISTER RELATIONS	\$244,791	0.78%
SUBTOTAL	\$3,489,496	11.13%
STATE BENEVOLENT INSTITUTIONS		
CHURCH RETIREMENT & PROTECTION	\$750,000	2.39%
BAPTIST CHILDREN'S VILLAGE	\$659,436	2.10%
MS BAPTIST FOUNDATION	\$397,703	1.27%
CHRISTIAN ACTION COMMISSION	\$310,180	0.90%
HISTORICAL COMMISSION	\$28,802	0.24%
MS BAPTIST HEALTH SYSTEMS	\$20,000	0.06%
SUBTOTAL	\$2,214,136	7.05%
EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP & COMMUNICATION		
BUSINESS/FINANCIAL SERVICES	\$762,752	2.42%
THE BAPTIST RECORD	\$571,138	1.82%
EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATION	\$532,614	1.70%
COMMUNICATION SERVICES	\$440,565	1.40%
COMPUTER INFORMATION SERVICES	\$281,980	0.90%
CONVENTION & CONVENTION COMM.	\$96,000	0.31%
SUBTOTAL	\$2,685,049	8.55%
STATE MISSIONS		
COLLEGIATE MINISTRY	\$2,193,715	6.99%
WMU/WM	\$717,153	2.29%
MEN'S MINISTRY	\$548,406	1.75%
MISSIONS MOBILIZATION	\$532,960	1.70%
MISSION STRATEGY	\$294,246	0.94%
CHURCH PLANTING & REVITALIZATION	\$402,920	1.28%
ASSOCIATIONAL MISSIONS	\$129,000	0.41%
SUBTOTAL	\$4,818,400	15.36%
TOTAL CP BUDGET	\$31,378,417	100.00%



GLOBAL MISSIONS/SBC	\$11,766,907
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION	\$6,404,429
CHURCH GROWTH MINISTRIES	\$3,489,496
STATE BENEVOLENT INSTITUTIONS	\$2,214,136
EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP & COMMUNICATION	\$2,685,049
STATE MISSIONS	\$4,818,400

COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

CP: From churches to the world

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

In the wee hours of Jan. 21, the unexpected became a reality at William Carey University in Hattiesburg.

The powerful EF-3 tornado that tore across campus may have been unexpected, but the school was far from unprepared. Emergency planning has been credited with helping the Baptist-affiliated university weather the violent episode without a single fatality and only seven non-life-threatening injuries.

Within hours, the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force was mobilizing. Trained Mississippi Baptist chainsaw teams were on the way to the William Carey University campus to cut away debris and clear roads for campus residents and emergency responders.

The task force's Mass Feeding Unit quickly went to work setting up their mobile kitchen in the parking lot of First Church, Petal. By the evening of Jan. 21, trained volunteers were serving thousands of hot meals to storm victims and responders of the wide-ranging storm.

The immediacy and effectiveness of the Mississippi Baptist response was really no surprise. For many years now, intense annual training and stockpiling of goods and equipment has meant a professional response from Mississippi Baptists is as close as the next storm front.

Financial gifts to the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' unified program of giving that funds everything from light bulbs in the local church to advanced seminary education and missions activities across the globe, played a significant role in the task force's planning, preparation, and response to the William Carey University disaster. The task force was ready and it showed, thanks in part to funding from the Cooperative Program.

How does the Cooperative Program work? Members of local Mississippi Baptist churches give to their churches; a Bible-based 10% tithe is recommended, of course. The leaders of local churches decide how much of the Cooperative Program funds to keep for their church's

ministries, and send the remainder to the state or regional Baptist convention in which they hold membership.

When messengers are selected by the local member churches and sent to the state or regional convention to represent their churches, they decide on a Cooperative Program budget that will fund state Baptist convention ministries. The remainder of the money is then sent on to the Southern Baptist Convention, where messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting decide how to spend that money for national and international ministries and causes.

That's it in simple terms. "Synergism" is the interaction or cooperation of two or more organizations, substances, or other agents to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects," said Rick Blythe, Stewardship Director for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson.

"Let me put that in modern vernacular: We can do more together than we can on our own. This is biblical. The preacher said, 'Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart' (Eccl. 4:9-10, 12).

"The Cooperative Program is like a three-cord strand. The individual gives to their church, the church votes to give a percentage of undesignated receipts through the Cooperative Program to the Mississippi Baptist Convention, and then the Cooperative Program reaches out through missions and ministries in all parts of Mississippi.

"In Mississippi, 62.5% of each CP dollar is used to support missions and ministries in our state, while 37.5% is sent to the Southern Baptist Convention to be used to support missions and ministries in our country and around the world.

"In Mississippi, CP dollars undergird the work and ministries of Mississippi

College, William Carey University, and Blue Mountain College. Every year, one or more natural disasters will occur and the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force is there to offer help and hope to those affected.

"Garaywa Camp and Conference Center in Clinton and Central Hills Retreat near West are preparing to welcome hundreds of eager campers this summer and, as in previous summers, many of those who come will make decisions to follow Christ. The Cooperative Program provides necessary funds to help keep the camps operational.

"These are but a few of the ways the Cooperative Program is vital to helping reach Mississippi for Jesus. The Cooperative Program is synergism at its best. Through our cooperative efforts, we work together to put love in action at home and around the globe!" Blythe said.

Tommy King, President of William Carey University, understood the value of the Cooperative Program long before the January tornado came calling. He's a veteran of many years of trustee service on Mississippi Baptist and Southern Baptist boards and committees.

"This tornado is only another in a series of disasters, and none of them has closed the school. I was heartened thinking of the steadfast support that we have received, along with Mississippi College and Blue Mountain College, from the Cooperative Program. The dependable support that we can count on gives us the stability to plan for our growth and recovery.

"This rebuilding will take 14 months and will be ready for fall of 2018. Our enrollment has held for spring trimester and indications are that we will have a good fall enrollment. The support provided by the Cooperative Program and emergency support from individual Baptists will make it possible for Carey to come back stronger than ever."

For more information on the Cooperative Program, contact Blythe at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3347 or toll-free outside Jackson: (800) 748-1651, ext. 347. E-mail: rbllythe@mbcb.org. Web site: mbcb.org.

REGION 1

Dr. John Boler

Pastor, First Church Grenada



For nearly a century, Southern Baptists have contributed to the Cooperative Program. As a graduate of a Southern Baptist seminary, I am grateful for the funds provided by fellow Southern Baptists that gave me the opportunity to further my education. Now as a pastor, I am striving to lead my church to be mission minded in every way possible. The mission field begins at home. It begins with our local budgets. Through prayer and a Kingdom vision, we should allocate as much as possible for the Cooperative Program. I firmly believe that when you set forth a vision to sacrificially support missions around the world that the Lord is pleased and His blessings will follow. The first step to leading your church to be on mission is to sacrificially give to the Cooperative Program.

REGION 3

Dr. Matt Brooks

Pastor, First Church Jackson



Faith and finances cannot be separated, as the Bible contains over 2,300 verses about money and possessions. Giving is enabled by God's grace and is an act of joyful faith in who God is, what He has done, and what He will continue to do for His glory. The Bible declares everything in heaven and earth belongs to God (1 Chronicles 29:11; Psalms 24:1). God has divinely entrusted man as His stewards on earth to honor Him with their possessions, abilities, and life (Genesis 1:28; Proverbs 3:9-10). A steward is a manager or one who handles the business affairs of a household (Luke 12:42; 1 Peter 4:10). Therefore, stewardship is a vital part of ministry and generosity describes the Christian life and is a gift of the Spirit (Romans 12:8; 2 Cor 8-9).

The Cooperative Program is an intentional stewardship and generous partnership of individual Baptists functioning as the body of Christ in their local church, and that church committing to maximize its impact for the gospel through state conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention. Giving is a matter of an obedient heart and giving to the Cooperative Program allows our resources to be multiplied throughout the world as offerings placed in the local church offering plate are immediately translated into missions and ministries at every level (Malachi 3:6-10; Matthew 6:19-24). The Cooperative Program begins with your gracious giving above your tithes and offerings to God, and it ends with you building up the kingdom of God through your local church, your state convention and the Southern Baptist Convention.



TOP 25 GIFTS TO THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM BY REGION

CHURCH / ASSOCIATION	CP GIFTS
LABELLE HAVEN/AT LARGE	98,384.92
GRACE CROSSING/AT LARGE	55,756.96
PARKWAY/AT LARGE	49,457.84
THE COMMUNITY CHURCH/AT LARGE	38,546.47
THE EXCHANGE/AT LARGE	18,149.72
PRIMERA PANOLA/AT LARGE	17,795.71
GRACE BIBLE CHURCH/AT LARGE	14,300.00
GRACE CITY CHURCH/AT LARGE	9,963.45
LOVENOW COMMUNITY CHURCH/AT LARGE	7,780.80
EMBRACE CHURCH/AT LARGE	5,561.02
CRISTO VIVE BAPTIST MISSION/AT LARGE	5,123.17
LIGHTHOUSE MISSION CHURCH/AT LARGE	5,000.00
BRIDGE COMMUNITY/AT LARGE	4,887.85
CHINESE GRACE BIBLE CHURCH/AT LARGE	4,708.50
NEW VISION COMMUNITY CHURCH/AT LARGE	4,006.61
REDEEMER/AT LARGE	3,900.00
MARANATHA/AT LARGE	3,647.19
THE CIRCLE CHURCH/AT LARGE	3,629.27
GRACE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH/AT LARGE	3,056.34
NEW JOURNEY CHURCH/AT LARGE	3,000.00
BRIDGEWAY CHURCH/AT LARGE	3,000.00
IGLESIA INTERN. LAS AMERICAS/AT LARGE	2,398.50
CHURCH AT WINDANCE/AT LARGE	2,370.00
CHINESE CHRISTIAN CHURCH/MSC ASSOC	2,000.00
METRO GRACE COMMUNITY/AT LARGE	1,879.00

CHURCH / ASSOCIATION	CP GIFTS
EMMANUEL/NORTH CENTRAL	278,157.90
FBC WINONA/MONTGOMERY	172,168.30
NORTH GREENWOOD/MID-DELTA	146,457.86
FBC CLEVELAND/MID-DELTA	128,546.97
FBC GREENVILLE/MID-DELTA	102,092.72
FBC GRENADA/NORTH CENTRAL	70,522.86
OAKHURST/NORTH DELTA	63,900.99
VAIDEN BAPTIST/CARROLL	54,956.72
FBC WATER VALLEY/YALOBUSHA	48,000.00
FRIENDSHIP/NORTH CENTRAL	46,927.51
FBC GREENWOOD/MID-DELTA	43,565.55
FBC INDIANOLA/MID-DELTA	41,741.58
CARROLLTON/CARROLL	36,795.86
NORTH WINONA/MONTGOMERY	34,264.93
CORNERSTONE/WASHINGTON	33,860.00
CLARKSDALE/NORTH DELTA	31,890.38
BETHSaida/MONTGOMERY	31,187.35
FBC BELZONI/HUMPHREYS	30,558.01
SKENE/MID-DELTA	25,641.29
EASTSIDE/HUMPHREYS	22,313.08
FBC LAMBERT/NORTH DELTA	21,892.28
EASTWOOD/MID-DELTA	21,604.98
SYLVA RENA/YALOBUSHA	21,149.86
IMMANUEL/MID-DELTA	20,292.60
CROWDER/NORTH DELTA	19,740.08

CHURCH / ASSOCIATION	CP GIFTS
HARRISBURG/LEE	448,999.54
FAIRVIEW/GOLDEN TRIANGLE	352,914.09
FBC STARKVILLE/GOLDEN TRIANGLE	292,341.29
FBC OXFORD/COLLABORATIVE	257,539.40
FBC CORINTH/ALCORN	233,725.20
NORTH OXFORD/COLLABORATIVE	232,537.37
DESOTO HILLS/X-TENDED MISSION	206,238.95
CALVARY/LEE	202,095.49
FBC BATESVILLE/PANOLA	194,482.39
FBC COLUMBUS/GOLDEN TRIANGLE	189,090.70
WEST HEIGHTS/PONTOTOC	186,019.06
LONGVIEW POINT/X-TENDED MISSION	169,416.57
FBC AMORY/MONROE	131,761.53
HILLCREST/UNION CO	130,630.92
FBC RIPLEY/BENTON-TIPPAH	128,890.90
FBC SENATOBIA/X-TENDED MISSION	124,893.07
MEADOWOOD/MONROE	111,345.54
LONGVIEW HEIGHTS/X-TENDED MISSION	109,475.85
FBC NEW ALBANY/UNION CO	103,437.99
OAKLAND/ALCORN	98,118.99
WHEELER GROVE/ALCORN	91,331.04
FBC TUPELO/LEE	90,795.04
FBC PONTOTOC/PONTOTOC	90,000.00
FBC WEST POINT/GOLDEN TRIANGLE	86,473.59
WEST JACKSON STREET/LEE	77,400.00



REGION 2

Brack Ladd

Pastor, Fairview Church, Columbus

Through the Cooperative Program, (CP), we partner together for the purpose of advancing the gospel of Jesus Christ among the nations. Since the inception of the CP in 1925, it has been a source of unity and encouragement for Southern Baptists in sharing the Gospel. Fairview Baptist Church is blessed to be a part of the CP which allows us the ability to partner with some 40,000 other local church bodies to engage the task of the Great Commission and fulfill Acts 1:8. Our participation allows us to help equip the next generation of pastors with a theological education, provide resources for missionaries across the globe, plant new churches, and partner to help revitalize existing churches among many other things. Through the Cooperative Program, we can have a part of sharing the Gospel everywhere there is a Southern Baptist church, missionary, or team.



REGION 4

Mark Vincent

Pastor, Clarke Venable Church, Decatur

He's a shy kid. Every children's ministry has one like him. He's at least one face in every junior high and high school ministry. He's that kid that really likes the idea of being involved and genuinely wants to participate until its time to get out of the car and go inside. That's when the great idea of being around a bunch of kids collides with the world of shy, his world. Then he balks. He struggles.

But something has radically changed in young Luke. He made it through high school and in May 2017, he will have completed two years of community college. There's more. He began attending the Baptist Student Union where he became actively involved. He was asked to serve on their leadership council. And then volunteered to participate in, of all things, the drama team. His role on the drama team is not a behind the scenes helper. No, he is out front boldly living out a changed life.

Because of your gifts to the Cooperative Program, a life has changed. When your Church participates in the Cooperative Program, a portion of the dollar you put in the plate supports the significant ministry of Baptist Student Unions on college campuses all across the State. It is personal. Because you give lives are changed.



REGION 5

Dr. Larry LeBlanc

Pastor, First Church Summit

Jesus prayed in John 17:22-23, "I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." Jesus prayer is answered when the church comes together in unity with a passion for reaching the lost with the gospel. The cooperative program is a valuable tool to make that worthy mission a reality. With over 5 billion people in our world that do not have a relationship with Christ and 80% of our churches in North America plateaued or declining, the necessity of coming together is vital. The task before us is great but together, we claim Jesus' promise in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS GIFTS TO CP!

REGION 3

CHURCH / ASSOCIATION	CP GIFTS
FBC JACKSON/METRO	809,683.39
BROADMOOR/METRO	493,000.00
MORRISON HEIGHTS/METRO	466,024.86
FBC MADISON/METRO	454,714.95
FBC BRANDON/RANKIN	285,817.79
FBC CLINTON/METRO	229,059.92
BRANDON/RANKIN	211,845.38
FBC BROOKHAVEN/LINCOLN	205,221.23
FBC FANNIN/RANKIN	196,527.79
PARKWAY/METRO	138,528.00
PARK WAY/RANKIN	134,937.71
FBC VICKSBURG/WARREN	130,278.76
FBC NATCHEZ/ADAMS	127,415.16
HICKORY RIDGE/RANKIN	114,049.63
MCLAURIN HEIGHTS/RANKIN	112,471.48
FBC FLORENCE/RANKIN	110,045.59
FBC FLORA/METRO	105,964.92
FBC RAYMOND/METRO	104,555.20
FBC RICHLAND/RANKIN	101,645.85
FBC MAGEE/SIMPSON	98,404.93
HILLCREST/METRO	95,568.12
FBC YAZOO CITY/YAZOO	90,178.02
MEADOW GROVE/RANKIN	82,446.45
FBC MENDENHALL/SIMPSON	81,600.58
FBC CRYSTAL SPRINGS/COPIAH	73,688.29

CHURCH / ASSOCIATION	CP GIFTS
FBC KOSCIUSKO/ATTALA	173,646.74
NORTHCREST/LAUDERDALE	152,565.98
POPLAR SPRINGS DRIVE/LAUDERDALE	139,740.21
FBC MERIDIAN/LAUDERDALE	134,636.07
FBC LOUISVILLE/WINSTON	134,362.53
FBC COLLINSVILLE/LAUDERDALE	122,283.85
HIGHLAND/LAUDERDALE	116,728.83
CLARKE VENABLE/NEWTON	96,169.25
FBC NEWTON/NEWTON	96,043.83
FBC QUITMAN/CLARKE	91,597.82
FBC PHILADELPHIA/NESHOBA	85,668.51
MIDWAY/LAUDERDALE	78,697.05
FOREST/SCOTT	77,029.19
WILLIAMSVILLE/ATTALA	68,115.81
NEW HOPE/LAUDERDALE	58,937.31
BAY SPRINGS/JASPER	55,912.25
FBC UNION/NEWTON	48,582.96
HICKORY/NEWTON	47,452.86
RUSSELL/LAUDERDALE	47,083.83
FELLOWSHIP/LAUDERDALE	46,111.14
WESTWOOD/LAUDERDALE	41,507.27
SPRINGFIELD/SCOTT	41,263.44
EAST PHILADELPHIA/NESHOBA	39,113.98
SEBASTOPOL/SCOTT	38,218.31
ENTERPRISE/CLARKE	36,645.27

REGION 5

CHURCH / ASSOCIATION	CP GIFTS
FBC SUMMITT/PIKE	245,972.90
FBC LAUREL/JONES	221,132.99
FBC COLUMBIA/MARION	198,328.97
TEMPLE/PINE BELT	193,864.19
PETAL HARVEY/PINE BELT	162,704.21
FBC GULFPORT/GULF COAST	161,359.14
FBC PICAYUNE/PEARL RIVER	145,072.42
CARTERVILLE/PINE BELT	142,918.33
FBC PASCAGOULA/JACKSON	108,875.20
FBC ELLISVILLE/JONES	105,562.23
BUNKER HILL/MARION	103,235.28
FBC WAYNESBORO/WAYNE	99,417.66
INDIAN SPRINGS/JONES	87,167.58
WADE/JACKSON	80,905.27
FBC LONG BEACH/GULF COAST	79,033.27
FBC SUMRALL/LAMAR	78,280.08
FBC WIGGINS/GULF COAST	75,647.14
FBC BILOXI/GULF COAST	72,938.59
TYLERTOWN/WALTHAM	67,536.89
MACEDONIA/PINE BELT	65,342.00
CALVARY/WAYNE	63,834.40
FBC MCCOMB/PIKE	61,879.02
WEST MCCOMB/PIKE	59,572.69
WHITESAND/COV-JEFF DAVIS	59,506.91
FBC GAUTIER/JACKSON	59,220.01

*This report is a listing of contributions made to the Lord's work which were received by the business office of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board from January 1, 2016, through December 31, 2016.

Dr. Jeff Iorg
President,
Gateway Seminary

Apart from God's sustaining power, the only reason a large Southern Baptist Seminary exists in the Western United States is the Cooperative Program. The comparatively few churches in our region would not have been able to make our school as strong as it has become. We are now one of the ten largest seminaries in the United States — largely because of your generous support through the Cooperative Program.

For us, being part of the Cooperative Program means more than just financial support. We also know thousands of churches and millions of members pray for us. This spiritual support network has been vital to our success. Over the past few years, while we were relocating the seminary and changing our name — we felt God's power and protection as a result of these prayers.

Thank you Mississippi Baptists! We are part of your family and proud to serve you in the Western United States.

Dr. Jason K. Allen
President,
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Begun by Southern Baptists nearly a century ago, the Cooperative Program has proven to be a most effective and enduring way to support our collective ministry and mission work. I often visit with leaders of other evangelical denominations who are envious of the Cooperative Program, and they should be; there is nothing like it in American Protestantism.

From the vantage point of being Midwestern Seminary's president, our institution benefits daily from the Cooperative Program. Without it, we would be forced to double tuition on our students. Such a move would decimate the seminary, plunge the enrollment, and bring immediate and long-term financial hardship on our students. In the world of theological education, the six SBC seminaries stand as grand anomalies in size, support, and overall strength. The Cooperative Program is essential to this vitality.

Midwestern Seminary is deeply grateful to Southern Baptists for their persistent generosity through the Cooperative Program, and we view it as one sign of God's continued favor on our work. In denominational circles, it is a modern miracle. Through the missions and ministries of the SBC, we have together impacted the world. I would strongly encourage every Southern Baptist to continue celebrating and strengthening our collective work through the CP.

Dr. Chuck Kelley
President,
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

There is nothing like it in the world. Upon hearing how CP provides funding for New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS), the president of a Louisiana Catholic University asked, "How do I become a Southern Baptist?" Many Southern Baptists do not realize CP is the most successful strategic plan for funding missions and ministry in the history of American Christianity.

The strategy driving CP is simple: participating churches set aside some portion of weekly tithes and offerings to fund the missions and ministries of the state convention in which the church is located and the missions and ministries of the national SBC. Each church sends its CP contribution to its Baptist state convention, who then sends the national/international CP portion to the Executive Committee of the SBC in Nashville. The Executive Committee staff then distributes the CP received to the various SBC entities. Messengers from participating churches determine how the CP money in a state is spent by approving a budget at their annual state convention. At the annual meeting of the SBC, messengers from participating churches also adopt a budget that determines how CP is distributed to all SBC entities.

How much does each church give to CP? Every church makes a voluntary decision about participation and level of funding. How long does it take a dollar to get from the offering plate of a church to the ministries supported by CP? Our seminary in New Orleans receives its portion of CP funding every week, usually on Tuesdays. Every week CP dollars given by SBC churches go from an offering plate to the ends of the earth. Amazing! There is nothing like it in the world.

Dr. Danny Akin
President,
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

At Southeastern, we are so grateful for the generosity of Southern Baptists through the Cooperative Program. Because more than 45,000 churches come together to pool their resources, we are able to do our part in reaching the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because of the Cooperative Program, our students are able to enroll for half the cost of what it would be at almost any other evangelical seminary outside of the SBC. You make it possible for them to go to hard places without debt so that they can focus on the mission of King Jesus. The support of Southern Baptists makes a difference for eternity here and around the world. We truly are able to do more together than we can ever do by ourselves.

Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr.
President,
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

The Cooperative Program is the greatest mechanism for directing and encouraging missions giving in the history of evangelical Christianity. For almost a century, the Cooperative Program has lived up to its name — combining the missions and denominational energies and resources of Southern Baptist Churches. These churches cooperate together in this great program that reaches from the smallest corners of each state to the most remote corners of the earth. It has made the impossible possible and has led to so much good for the Gospel of Jesus Christ and for the expansion of Baptist churches around the globe. I am a product of the Cooperative Program and I am an eager champion of the Cooperative Program. I thank God for the generous support of CP giving and also pray for expanded giving in years to come.

Mr. Paige Patterson
President,
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Attending meetings of educators in the United States is an exercise in sorrow. The lugubrious desperation of other seminary presidents about the cost of theological education, is offset only by six smiling faces with an optimistic future. Those would be the faces of the six Southern Baptist Convention Seminary Presidents who are rejoicing amidst all this hopelessness because of our relationships to SBC churches through the Cooperative Program. The Mississippi Baptist Convention and its churches are linked together with churches and other state conventions in the most glorious world mission effort since the days of the apostles!

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Paul, in 2 Corinthians, is involved in the first cooperative missions effort. He did not name it that, but it was an appeal to all the churches to help the needy Jerusalem church. We, as Southern Baptists, must be grateful to God that we adopted that biblical example and join hands in preparing the next generation of pastors and missionaries for Kingdom enterprise.

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52

Prayer

Pray the year in prayer for our missionaries!



We've all heard the saying, "A cat has nine lives." Apparently, the possibility of a state lottery also has nine lives. I was told when I began to work with the Legislature in January that nothing is dead until it is, "Dead, dead, dead." I was an eyewitness in the House of Representatives when not one, not two, but three attempts at a state lottery were rejected. I am grateful to those responsible for the repeated rejection of a state lottery. I thought at that point, and others in the legislature thought that a state lottery was, "Dead, dead, dead."

But then, March 27th came. I got up in Jackson on that Monday morning and drove to First Baptist Church in Tupelo, MS. I had the wonderful privilege, thanks to

Charles Rodgers, of preaching at the Senior Citizen Rally for northeast Mississippi (area 2). We had a wonderful time. I drove back to Jackson and went straight to the North gallery of the House. At midnight, sitting in the gallery, I watched the train wreck as the Legislature missed the deadline on certain budget items for the next year. March 27 came and went without the budget being completed.

Though I am a rookie, I believe some in our leadership in our state government wanted this to happen. You say, "Why would you believe that?" Missing the deadline necessitates

the Governor calling a special session before June 30. He can blame the Legislature for the wasted money of a special session in a state economy hurting for revenue.

A special session can (I did say can, not will) give him and his followers (I did say followers, not leadership) a fresh start on a state lottery. It will be the Governor's call whether or not the special session deals with a state lottery. If (and I did say if) the Governor chooses to ask the special session to deal with a state lottery, it will be "short notice" with little warning. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound

of cure. Please go ahead while you have time and opportunity to let the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the Speaker of the House, and your Senator and Representative know how you feel. By the time you know about the problem, it may be too late.

Be proactive on this issue. Anyone against the lottery will appreciate your effort; anyone who doesn't appreciate your effort needed it anyway, so let them know. Contact your elected officials in our state. The main number at the Capitol is 601-359-3770.

You have heard the old saying, "There's more than one

way to skin a cat." A special session of our Legislature could be another way for those in favor of a quick fix for our economy and budget to "skin a cat" with a state lottery. But who wants a dead cat?

Some in our state would have you believe the lottery is the "Cat's Meow" for all that ails our state's economy and budget. This same bunch that said casino gambling would solve all our problems. Please, don't gamble on the lottery. It is better to be safe than sorry.

Digby is executive director-treasurer of the Christian Action Commission. He can be reached at (601) 292-3329/office, (662) 284-9163/cell, or by e-mail at kdigby@christianaction.com.

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GDRAA HUYUCIU EU, HUYUCIU KD WLK
EU, SJK DCE KDRK GUWK EU.
ERHP WCWU: KDCHKB-GUIUW.

Clue: W = N

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Psalm 11:4

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

SYRIA

cont. from p. 1

using chemical weapons that have resulted in the deaths and sufferings of scores of Syrian civilians. Americans must not be isolationists in such matters."

Gaines agreed with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's assessment that, "in both

word and action [Trump] sent a strong and clear message [that] the use and spread of chemical weapons will not be tolerated."

The SBC president added, "When military bullies harm helpless people, someone should stand up for the innocent and for righteousness. I believe America should do just that."

Carver, now the North American Mission Board's executive director of chaplaincy, claimed the American strike should be considered an ethical use of military force for at least three reasons:

■ It had a just cause because "the U.S. had warned... Assad for over five years against the movement or deployment of weapons of mass destruction," and Assad "failed to heed the clear warnings."

"In the aftermath of this week's deadly gas attack, it simply made no sense for President Trump to wait for Assad to use these deadly weapons at some point again in the future. It was necessary for the sake of peace and order in that region," Carver told BP in written comments.

■ Trump's order to strike was lawful and in keeping with the U.S. president's "authority to take limited military actions that protect U.S. national security, promote our democratic values, and defend the innocent of other nation states."

"If the U.S. had done nothing, it would have been a dereliction of our duty as a world power and a nation founded on Judeo-Christian principles."

■ The strike was a "last resort" following years of diplomatic, economic, and political efforts to halt human rights violations by the Assad regime.

Immediate past U.S. President Barack Obama threatened Assad with retaliation after Assad earlier used chemical weapons on his own people, but backed down later when Assad did so.

Carver added that Americans should "pray without ceasing for our president and all of those who are in authority over our lives, especially during this critical time in the history of the world."

"Pray that God will provide President Trump the wisdom, discernment and moral courage to meet his increasing demands as commander-in-chief," Carver said. "Pray that the president exercises his authority in a credible, noble and God-fearing way.

"Pray for God's protection, provision, perseverance, and peace on the members of the Armed Services who support and defend our nation, and who are deployed in harm's way preserving global peace and order."

ERLC's Moore said "the crisis in Syria ought to shock every human conscience," adding the missile strike is "welcome," if part of a larger strategy for Syria.

"It ought to be clear that the Assad regime's murderous terrorism there threatens to further unravel the already precarious situation in the Middle East, and has implications both for human rights and national security."

"As long as the most recent actions by the United States are part of a long-term strategy to resolve this crisis, I see them as welcome."

"We should pray for the president and our country's national security leaders for wisdom in confronting this awful situation. Above all, we should pray for peace and justice in Syria, and for the thriving of the Syrian church, where we have had brothers and sisters in Christ since before Paul's Damascus Road conversion."

Following the strike, ERLC tweeted, "We are praying for the people of Syria, who are created in the image of God. Will you join us?"



GAINES



CARVER



MOORE

THE VILLAGE VIEW



Sean A. Milner, Executive Director
P.O. Box 27
Chilton, MS 39060-0027
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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is accepted each year to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor with taste and respect those who are and have been special to our special friends.

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Pastor's Choice, Children's Choice, Best In Show

PARTICIPANT JUDGING BY POPULAR VOTE

Where Is Jesus? • Matthew 28:1-15

My kids loved the book, *Where's Waldo?* The reader would have to find Waldo, a boy with distinguishing characteristics, hiding on the page yet in plain sight. I am sorry but that was my first thought when I read the title of today's lesson, *Where's Jesus?* Perhaps the titles have more in common than we think.

You are familiar with the scene in the scripture. Jesus had died a horrible death, was put in a borrowed tomb, and now Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were on their way to anoint Jesus' body. Instead of Jesus, they meet an angel who announced Jesus had risen "just as He said," then told them to go to Galilee. On the way, they encountered Jesus who told them to tell the brothers!

This is a familiar story. But there are three I saw anew when I read it this time.

1. Jesus had told them what was going to happen; it shouldn't have been a surprise. After Peter's announcement that Jesus was the Messiah, we read, "From that time on Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things...and be killed and on the third day be raised." Matthew 16:21 (ESV) Perhaps the angel was pressing that point when he said, "just as He said." Why didn't those who were the closest to Jesus remember?

2. Those who were not believers (the Romans and the Pharisees) did remember what Jesus had said and did what they could to prevent it. Why else would guards be stationed at the tomb and guard a grave unless there was a possibility something could happen?

3. The Pharisees were really bad liars! (This one made me laugh.) When the guard at the tomb told the chief priest that the body was gone he was bribed and was told to tell everyone, "His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep." Matthew 28:13 (ESV) If the guards were asleep, how would they have known it was the disciples who came? Even with this lack of logic, this story spread among the Jews to discredit Jesus' resurrection.

Would we have behaved any differently? We have a Monday morning quarterback view of the situation but what if

that same question was asked about Jesus today. How would we respond?

After a tragedy we often hear, "Where was God?" or "Where was Jesus when I needed Him?" When disaster strikes, perhaps our emotions are much like those who were grieving Jesus' death and saw the empty grave. Our minds can't comprehend. It doesn't make sense! Where is Jesus?

He is within us... hidden in plain sight. Paul's words to the Colossians, who were under great trials, were, "Since, then, you have been

raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." Colossians 3:1-4 (NIV) Where is Jesus? He is seated at the right hand of God, a place of authority and power and OUR life

is hidden in Him. To find Him we need to adjust our focus and our vision. In *Where's Waldo*, we would spend hours trying to find this character among all the red and white things surrounding him, but once he was found, we could never un-see him. Our eyes quickly went to that part of the picture again. Our search was over for that page.

Where is Jesus? He is all around us and in us. When we adjust our focus, we see Him and we can never again un-see Him. Jesus told His disciples more than about His death and resurrection. He told them he was going away to prepare a place for them and would come back. (John 14) He did. If He said He would come back-He will.

The news gets better. Revelation 19:11 states He is sitting on a white horse preparing to avenge every wrong that has been done to His Bride, the church. His name is Faithful and True and He is coming in power and might so that we will have no more tears, no more sorrow, no more pain.

Where is Jesus? He is risen! He is risen indeed!

Grace is a Bible teacher, conference leader, and member of First Church, Clinton.



Explore the Bible
with Cyndi Grace

He is Risen! • Luke 24:1-6, 36-40

The birth of Christ into the world was recognized several centuries later as being the turning point of history. This changed the way time was and is recorded to either B.C., before Christ, or A.D., which in Latin is Anno Domini, meaning in the year of our Lord. The resurrection of Jesus is another world changing and history making event. And just as the birth of Jesus gave us Christmas, the resurrection of Jesus has given us Easter.

But Jesus rising from the dead did much more than earn us another holiday or holy day on our calendars. The resurrection of Jesus is the hinge from which Christianity swings. It is the validation of all that Jesus preached and taught. For believers, the reality of Easter is that Jesus has taken the sting and fear out of death: "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:55-57 NIV).

Therefore, death, which once was the greatest enemy to humanity, is now an event we actually look forward to. Because according to Paul who said to be absent from the body is to be present with the

Lord, death for the believer is simply an open door into eternity with God. It ushers us into his holy presence as it did with Lazarus the beggar (Luke 16:22).

At the burial site of another man named Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, Jesus spoke these powerful and wonderful words before he called this dead man back to life, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (Jn. 11:25-26 NIV). Upon

Jesus' own resurrection, his claim to have power over the grave was solidly proven.

As Mary and her two friends walked toward the burial site of Jesus on Sunday morning, it was with heavy hearts. In their minds Jesus was dead and gone. Their last recollection of their Lord was of him hanging lifelessly upon the cross. But what a sur-

prise awaited them. Listen to the awesome words of the angel in Luke 24 verses five and six: "Why are you looking for the living among the dead? He is not here, but he has risen." Doesn't that just make your soul leap with joy and your lips want to shout hallelujah, praise the Lord, and glory to God?

The death grip of the grave could not hold Jesus and it will not hold believers

either. Listen to what the Apostle Paul said to the Thessalonian Christians who had questions about the condition of loved ones who were believed but had

died: "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are

left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words" (1 Thess. 4:13-18 NIV).

The disciples doubted Mary's declaration that she had seen Jesus alive. Therefore, the Lord appeared in their midst in verses 36-40 bringing them proof of his victory over death. He showed them the scars on his hands and feet, identifying himself as the one who was nailed to the cross. Then they believed.

There continues to be many who doubt the bodily resurrection of Christ today, but those of us who have experienced his presence and undergone a radical life change know the grave is empty and our hearts are full. He indeed is risen.

Burnett is pastor of Willow Pointe Church, Hattiesburg.

Bible Studies for Life with Jim Burnett



Clayton C. Bath, 85, long-time Mississippi Baptist pastor, died March 18 in his



BATH

home in Dothan, Ala., of complications from bone cancer. He was a member of Bethel Church, Dothan. Born Nov. 27, 1931 in Laramie, Wyo., he grew up there and in Fort Collins, Co. Following in his father's profession, he studied chiropractic medicine prior to entering the U.S. Army during the Korean Conflict where he served as a medic. Called into the Christian ministry, Bath was a graduate of Tennessee Temple College in Chattanooga

and earned a Master of Theology degree at New Orleans Seminary. He served most of his ministry in Mississippi, his longest tenure being that of 20 years as pastor of Port Gibson Church, Port Gibson. Bath also served Emmanuel Church, Starkville; Lakeview Church, Leland; and First Church, Tchula. After retirement he served as interim pastor of Daniel Memorial Church, Jackson. Bath was preceded in death by his parents; a twin brother, Clifford Bath; and an infant son, David Lee Bath. He is survived by his wife of nearly 60 years, Eleanor Jones Bath; daughter Diana Hancock (Mark) of Madison, Ala.; son Stephen Alan Bath (Janice) of New-

port, N.C.; and six grandchildren. A private family graveside service was held on March 19. (Source: Ward-Wilson Funeral Home, Dothan)

Gerald P. Buckley, 80, of Petal, long-time Mississippi Baptist pastor, died March 27 at Ochsner Medical Center in New Orleans. Buckley was born July 18, 1936, in Hattiesburg to J.C. and Ruby Buckley. He grew up in Main Street Church, Hattiesburg, where he was saved, surrendered to God's call, and was licensed and ordained. Buckley was a graduate of Hattiesburg High School, Mississippi College in Clinton, and Southeastern Semi-

nary in Wake Forest, N.C. After graduating from seminary, Buckley ministered at Pipey Grove Church in Gretna, Va., West Heights Church in Pontotoc, Parkway Church in Natchez, and Petal Harvey Church in Petal. He is survived by his wife, Billie Buckley of Petal; two sons, Steve (Kristi) Buckley of Petal and Stan (Jewell) Buckley of Madison; and five grandchildren. Funeral service was held March 30 at Petal Harvey Church, followed by burial in Sunrise Church Cemetery, Petal. (Source: The Daily Journal, Tupelo)



BUCKLEY

Just for the Record



Sixteen youth and adults from **TRINITY CHURCH, MONROE COUNTY**, attended the DNow discipleship conference at the ALC center in Becker in February. Justin Simmons, pastor.

In other Church

News:

► **Flat Top Unity Church, Picaune**, is hosting a two-day Easter event Apr. 14 - 15. Fri., interactive Easter drama, 6 p.m.; Sat., family picnic, egg hunt, candy, jumpers, snow cones, and prizes, 11 a.m.

► **Highland Church, Laurel**, is hosting an Easter celebration Apr. 16. Celebration services, 8 and 10:30 a.m.; community pancake breakfast, 9 - 10:45 a.m.

► **Rock Branch Church, Union**, ordained George B. Heath III to the ministry Mar. 12. He has accepted the pastorate of Lawrence Church, Lawrence.



NEW LIFE CHURCH, PEARL RIVER, ordained Bobby Stuart to the ministry. Shown are former pastor Rusty Kuhn, Kim Stuart, Stuart, AMD Carl Myers, and Clarence Perrett.



PEARL RIVER BAPTIST ASSOCIATION RA Race Day was held on February 11. Winners are as follows - Lads: 1st Place - Jacob Cotton, Bethel Church; 2nd Place - Justin Dillard, Bethel; 3rd Place - Peyton Shepard, Roseland Park Church. Crusaders: 1st Place - Jimmy Griffith, Bethel; 2nd Place - Landon Wells, Bethel; 3rd Place - Tristan Gennin, Bethel. Best in Show: Michaiah Tatum, Union. Best Sportsmanship: Brock Gramling, Roseland Park.

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically

via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. **Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted.** Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

Staff Changes



After 50 years of ministry, Tommy & Diane Winders are retiring and redirecting their ministry. He is available for supply preaching, serving as interim pastor, or leading in revival. He can be contacted at 161 Westbriar Road., Saltillo, 38866; phone (662) 346-4874 or 231-5553; or email tjwinds2346@gmail.com.



GOOD HOPE CHURCH, RICHTON, has called Anthony O'Neal as pastor. He is shown with his wife Amy, son Josiah, and daughter Sophie. Not shown are his son Mark and daughter Vivian.

Need a light?

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)
If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.